

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
SWP convention sets course
to build revolutionary party
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 81/NO. 5 FEBRUARY 6, 2017

Trump moves into White House, faces liberal outcry

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Republican billionaire President Donald Trump provoked an uproar among liberals Jan. 20 when he described the bleak conditions millions of workers face in his inaugural speech. On the steps of the U.S. Capitol he declared, “This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.”

These critics called Trump’s address “dark” and “divisive,” exposing the fact that they live in a different world from working people and don’t experience the crisis workers and farmers face under today’s grinding depression conditions. They can’t understand that Trump won the presidency by acknowledging the economic and social devastation workers face and promising to deal with it, something neither he nor any capitalist politician can accomplish.

“The US ruling families and their rivals in Europe and the Pacific en-

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Syrian toilers face disaster as area rulers seek leverage

BY NAOMI CRAINE

Two days of talks seeking a political settlement that would defend the sponsoring capitalist regimes’ interests ended Jan. 24 without any agreement between the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad and opponents of his dictatorial rule. The sponsoring governments of Russia, Turkey and Iran announced they would set up a joint system for monitoring the shaky cease-fire that has been in effect since Dec. 30, with details to be worked out later.

The talks took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, with United Nations envoy Staffan de Mistura serving as mediator. The Donald Trump administration decided not to send a delegation from Washington; the U.S. ambassador to Kazakhstan attended as an observer.

This new cooperation between Moscow and Tehran (both have backed Assad) and Ankara (which has

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Freedom for Oscar López! Release is set for May 17



Above, May 29, 2016, march in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Inset, Oscar López’s daughter Clarisa at Jan. 17 press conference in San Juan, announcing that the fighter for independence from U.S. colonial rule would be released by May 17 after nearly 36 years in federal prison.

SWP: Victory for Puerto Rico, all working people

The following message to Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López Rivera was sent Jan. 21 by Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York.

Dear Oscar,

The Jan. 17 commutation of your sentence is a victory for the people of Puerto Rico and all those around the world who fought for your freedom. It’s a testament to your intransigent

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López: Step up fight to end colonial rule in Puerto Rico

BY SETH GALINSKY

After nearly 36 years in jail in the United States — including more than 12 in solitary confinement — Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López Rivera will be released without conditions by May 17. President Barack Obama announced the commutation of his sentence Jan. 17.

Supporters of López’s fight for freedom celebrated across Puerto Rico; in New York; Chicago; Kissimmee,

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Fidel Castro, Cuba’s revolution celebrated at Washington forum



Le Canal Nabo News

Cuban Ambassador José Ramón Cabañas, with microphone, and Gnaka Lagoke, far right, of the Revival of Panafricanism Forum, at Jan. 7 meeting in Washington, D.C., to celebrate political life and leadership of Fidel Castro and internationalism of Cuban Revolution.

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

WASHINGTON — Some 200 people gathered here Jan. 7 for a meeting to pay tribute to the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, who died Nov. 25. Titled “Cuba, Africa and the World: A Tribute to Fidel Castro,” speakers discussed Castro’s decisive political leadership at all the crucial turning points in the Cuban Revolution and his unbroken

proletarian internationalism.

“Thank you for talking about Fidel’s life with happiness, and without a sentiment of loss,” said José Ramón Cabañas, Cuban ambassador to the United States. “Many U.S. workers respect Fidel.”

Fidel’s enemies have been wondering about the ‘post-Castro Cuba’ for years, Cabañas said. Describing how

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‘Women’s march’ no advance in fight for rights of women

BY MAGGIE TROWE

WASHINGTON — The day after the Trump inauguration, several hundred thousand people took part in a bourgeois “Women’s March on Washington” happening organized by political forces bitterly disappointed that Hillary Clinton had not been elected. The Bernie Sanders “Our Revolution” group, the Communist Party and numerous others promoted the action as part of resuscitating the Democratic Party with a more progressive veneer and fighting “Trumpism.” Similar rallies took place in many U.S. cities and around the world.

The action was called the day after the November election by people who had expected they would be celebrating the ascendancy of the first woman president.

Far from signaling the rise of a new women’s movement, the rally weakened the fight for women’s rights. It wasn’t organized around any concrete

demands. It wasn’t aimed at spurring state-by-state battles to defend a woman’s right to choose abortion against continuing attacks. It drew

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Momentive strikers rally against Wall Street owner

West Coast crab fisherman end strike against price cut

UK: Hundreds protest against cop killing of Yassar Yaqub

BY HUGO WILS
AND TONY HUNT

HUDDERSFIELD, England — Some 80 people attended a protest vigil on the ramp off the M62 motorway Jan. 9, where Mohammed Yassar Yaqub, 28, was shot dead by police a week earlier. A protest brought traffic to a standstill Jan. 3 in nearby Bradford. Hundreds attended Yaqub’s funeral here.

Dozens of young people mainly from Pakistani families joined the Jan. 9 action, wearing sweatshirts saying, “No justice, no humanity, no peace” and “No chance to surrender, no warning shots, unlawful killing.”

At 6 p.m. Jan. 2, Yaqub was traveling in a car that was boxed in suddenly by unmarked West Yorkshire Police cars in a “hard stop.” The cops didn’t wear body cameras, so there is no recording of what transpired. Photographs showed three bullet holes in the windscreen of Yaqub’s car.

“We are protesting because we’re determined to get justice, at least we can try to stop this from happening again,” Mohammed Rizwan, a protest organizer, told Pete Clifford, Communist League candidate for Greater Manchester mayor, at the Jan. 9 action. “We don’t know exactly what happened, but they didn’t have to kill him.”

“The police should be prosecuted for this crime,” Clifford said, “so they’ll think twice next time before carrying out a hard stop and killing somebody.”

An official inquest into the death opened in Bradford, establishing that Yaqub died from gunshot wounds to his chest. The police say a firearm was found in the car.

The big-business newspapers have been using this claim, and the fact he was charged in 2010 with attempted murder, for which he was acquitted, to launch a smear campaign, alleging he was a “drugs kingpin.”

Mohammed Yaqub, Yassar’s father, answered the attacks on his son. “He hasn’t got a bad past, because he’s never been convicted of anything,” he told a BBC reporter, “I want answers, full answers, nothing but the truth. How can you kill someone like this, at a time like this, without giving him a chance to get out or anything?”

Clifford and other Communist League members campaigned in working-class neighborhoods in the area before the protest, discussing the deepening crisis of the capitalist system worldwide and the need to build a working-class party to lead the fight for workers power.

The capitalist rulers increasingly

Mother: ‘Facts show NY police killed Mohamed Bah’



Justice Committee

NEW YORK — “I was happy to get parents and families together” involved in actions against cop brutality and killings, Hawa Bah told the *Militant* Jan. 18. The “Faith Action for Mohamed Bah,” above, at the Department of Justice offices here Jan. 12 was organized by the Justice Committee to demand U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara prosecute the cops who killed her son, Mohamed Bah.

On Sept. 25, 2012, Hawa Bah dialed 911 to ask for an ambulance for her son, a student and taxi driver who was suffering from a mental breakdown. Instead of medical personnel, five heavily armed cops arrived. “I told them, ‘My son didn’t do anything wrong. He’s sick and needs to go to the hospital,’” she said. They pushed past her, went up to Bah’s apartment and shot him dead.

The original account by police spokespeople claimed Mohamed Bah had plunged a 13-inch knife into two officers, slicing their protective vests and prompting detective Edwin Mateo to yell, “He’s stabbing me, shoot him.”

In November 2013 a grand jury ruled that the “use of deadly physical force was not unlawful” in Bah’s killing. But documents showing that Mateo later changed his story, saying that he was actually hit by a police Taser, were kept from Bah and her attorneys. Officials say the knife and other evidence in the case were never tested for fingerprints and are now “contaminated” or “lost.”

In a civil lawsuit filed by Hawa Bah against the city, her attorney Randolph McLaughlin deposed Mateo, who admitted that Bah had not stabbed him.

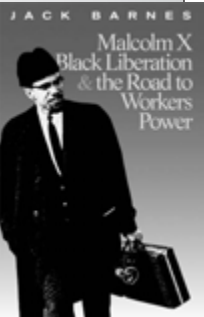
— BRIAN WILLIAMS

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, & the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes

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THE MILITANT

Back workers’ struggles worldwide

Workers are fighting bosses’ attacks worldwide, from coal miners in western Ukraine who went on a hunger strike demanding three months’ back pay to unionists striking against Momentive in Waterford, New York. The ‘Militant’ champions these struggles.



KVUP

Members and supporters of Ukraine miners during hunger strike for back pay Nov. 7-14.

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fear working people will respond to the grinding depression conditions they face, League members said, and the police are beginning to use more heavy-handed methods to try and keep the working class in line.

“If they had some prior knowledge about criminal activities they could have arrested him in a different situation,” Andy Ammon, a self-employed plumber, told Clifford. “It doesn’t matter whether he is a drug dealer or not, like any other human being he deserves a fair trial. I think it is easier to slander him because he is Asian and a Muslim, racism plays a role in this.”

“The killing was wrong. Why didn’t they arrest him and let a jury decide whether or not he was guilty of a crime?” Mohammed Afzil, an engineering factory worker, told Clifford.

“We have to challenge the way the cops act as judge, jury and executioner, and then spread smears to justify it,” Clifford said. “This is similar to the hard stop used against Mark Duggan in London in 2011 and by Greater Manchester police in 2012 that resulted in them killing Anthony Grainger. It’s an assault on the rights all workers have won, on the presumption of innocence and the right to trial by jury.”

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‘Women’s march’ no advance

Continued from front page

few unionists or African-Americans.

The action did mobilize large numbers of middle-class marchers caught up by hysteria depicting Donald Trump and the “deplorables” who backed him as some kind of latter-day Nazis.

Hillary Clinton angered millions of workers last September when she described Trump supporters as a “basket of deplorables” who are “racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic — you name it” and “irredeemable.”

Billionaire capitalist Trump is rebuilding the Republican Party by appealing to workers angry about the effects on their lives from the world capitalist crisis. With nationalist demagoguery he promises to “Make America Great Again” and create jobs and prosperity.

‘Join the Socialist Workers Party’

Socialist Workers Party members went to the Women’s March on Washington and other actions looking to debate and discuss political perspectives with those who participated, seeking to meet those who want a serious discussion about how working people can fight back effectively. While many disagreed with our working-class outlook, or complained about one of the books we offered — *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People* — we found quite a few interested in the SWP and how we can fight for unions, for women’s equality, against police brutality and to end the colonial oppression of Puerto Rico. We discussed and debated why neither Democrats nor Republicans serve the interests of the working class. And we pointed to the examples for working people of the Cuban and Russian revolutions.

SWP member Glova Scott met Lauren Adams, 30, a sports videographer from Pasadena, California, who has taken part in protests against racism and police brutality since 2012. “I’ve been in the streets. But we’re lacking perspective. I think that’s true here as well,” she told Scott.

“I’m in the Socialist Workers Party,” Scott told her. “The fight against police brutality is important, but to end cop violence we must uproot its source — the capitalist system. The SWP runs its own candidates, like Dennis Richter for mayor of Los Angeles where you’re

from, to win workers to a perspective of fighting to end the dictatorship of capital with its dog-eat-dog values and replace it with a society run by working people and built on human solidarity.”

“That sounds pretty good,” Adams said, adding she would like to meet Richter when she gets home.

At the Chicago rally Raven Reed overheard SWP member Dan Fein telling another marcher, “This rally would never have been organized if Clinton had won the election. The Democrats say they’re for women’s rights, but they have demobilized the fight. We are building the Socialist Workers Party to lead the working class in making a socialist revolution.”

“I think you’re right,” Reed told Fein, joining the conversation.

Alex Bergstrom, a writer for a training company, talked to Samir Qaisar at the SWP table, saying he was looking for “an alternative vision.”

“We have one — revolutionary Cuba,” Qaisar replied. Bergstrom bought a copy of *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record*. SWP members in Chicago got the names of nine people who wanted to get together to discuss further, sold 26 books, seven subscriptions and 66 single copies of the *Militant*.

‘Looking for socialists’

“I was looking for the socialist and union movement, so I signed up to campaign for Bernie Sanders with the Democratic Socialists of America,”

NY prison authorities punish, move Jalil Muntaqim

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — Former Black Panther Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom) was transferred from Attica Correctional Facility to Southport Correctional Facility, a notorious supermax prison just south of Elmira, New York, in early January.

“This is clearly a punitive transfer,” Anne Lamb told the *Militant* Jan. 11. “It also means he’s much farther away from his legal advisers in Buffalo.” Lamb is a spokesperson for the Jericho Movement, a group that Muntaqim helped found, which works to win amnesty for political prisoners.

Muntaqim was put in solitary confinement at Attica on Dec. 6 and then sentenced to four months of solitary. In a letter to supporters Muntaqim explained that during a class he was teaching to fellow inmates on Black History he had stated that gangs need to “get organized, get away from criminal behavior and tribal warfare.”

Prison officials twisted the comments to find him guilty of encouraging others “to engage in gang activities,” “violent conduct,” and encouraging other inmates to participate in a work-stoppage or “other actions which may be detrimental to the order of [the] facility.” They dismissed initial charges of making a speech “without authorization,” and “unauthorized organizational activities.”

Southport holds the second largest number of prisoners in SHUs — Special Housing Units — that is, solitary confinement, in New York state. Except for prisoners called “cadre” who are assigned to aid prison staff, all inmates are confined to their cells 23 hours a day and given food through slots in the cell door. They are allowed to exercise one



Shiffa Rizki

SWP member Betsy Farley shows *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People* to Alex Bergstrom at Jan. 21 “Women’s March” in Chicago. He bought it.

said Madhu Tikkisetty, a 32-year-old Indian-born information technology worker from Baltimore, when she ran into SWP members and subscribed to the *Militant* in Washington. “When we talked with Black and immigrant workers at Metro stops last year, a lot of them said they were for Trump because he talks about jobs.” Tikkisetty spent the rest of the afternoon with us as we talked with people at the march. She left with six books on working-class history and communist politics under her arm.

Some Bikers for Trump who had stayed in Washington after the inauguration were playing country music near the Women’s March. “I tried to talk with people from the march,” Debbie Clay, a union lab worker from Barboursville,

West Virginia, told me and Tikkisetty. “But most of them yelled, ‘How can you support Trump? He’s a racist and a fascist.’ I argued it wasn’t true, told them Clinton was part of globalization and that we need jobs where I come from.”

Her friend Teresa Jones, a special education teacher’s aide from Bethalto, Illinois, said she liked Bernie Sanders as well, “but he got a raw deal” from Democratic Party tops.

I told them I had supported Alyson Kennedy, the Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate, and am part of building a party that fights for unions and unity of the working class and has confidence in the capacity of ordinary workers to take power. They got copies of the *Militant* to learn more.

hour a day in a small metal cage called the “kennel.”

Authorities at Attica had singled out Muntaqim for a while, putting him on mail watch and punishing him for writing to a prison reform group. In 2015 he was not allowed to receive several books, including a book of poems that he wrote. After he was placed in solitary, Lamb reports, he was finally given the book.

Prison authorities also impounded several issues of the *Militant* sent to Muntaqim, which the *Militant* is fighting.

Lamb visited Muntaqim in Southport Jan. 14. “Jalil’s spirits are high, as always,” she said. Visitors are separated from prisoners by plexiglass, “but there is about a 3 to 4 inch space at the bottom so you can hold hands and share food.”

Muntaqim is fighting to get all the charges dropped and to get transferred out of Southport and returned to the general prison population. Supporters of free speech and constitutional rights can aid this fight by writing to the New York State Department of Corrections. Address letters to Anthony Annucci, Acting Commissioner, New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, Harriman State Campus, 1220 Washington Ave., Albany, New York 12226.

Muntaqim has been in prison since he was 19 years old, accused of killing two police officers in 1971.

In a letter to supporters, Muntaqim said that he is “elated that Judith Clark was granted clemency” by Gov. Andrew

Cuomo. Clark was found guilty of driving a getaway car in the 1981 robbery, allegedly by Weather Underground, of a Brink’s armored car that left a guard and two police officers dead. Cuomo reduced her sentence from 75 years in prison to 35 years to life. This makes her eligible for parole this year.

At the same time, Muntaqim noted, officials in New York and elsewhere refuse to take any action that could lead to the release of “Black political prisoners suffering the government’s relentless vindictive posture,” including Sundiata Acoli, Mutulu Shakur, Herman Bell and Seth Hayes. This highlights the “pervasive racially discriminatory practices in the New York State prison and parole system,” he said. Muntaqim, Bell and Hayes were sentenced to 25 years to life in New York, but have been repeatedly denied parole. Muntaqim’s supporters are asking Gov. Andrew Cuomo to commute his sentence.

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To get involved, for information or to make a contribution, contact party units listed on page 10

Thousands march in Gaza vs. Hamas cuts in electricity

BY LEA SHERMAN

Working people in the Gaza Strip won a victory when they forced the Hamas government to restore electricity to previous levels, following a series of protests. In the middle of winter, residents were provided with just four hours of electricity at a time followed by 12 hours without power. This was a steep cut from the already low levels of eight hours prior to the crisis.

The largest action was Jan. 12 when some 10,000 Palestinians in Jabaliya, the largest of eight refugee camps in Gaza, took to the streets.

In a rare sign of public protest in Gaza, which is tightly controlled by the Islamist group Hamas, they marched to the offices of the electricity company. Protesters chanted, “Raise your voice, electricity cuts mean death,” “Oh, Haniya and Abbas, we are being trampled!” and “The people want the fall of the regime.”

The chants were aimed at Ismail Haniya, leader of Hamas, and Mahmoud Abbas, head of the rival Fatah party and the president of the Palestinian Authority ruling in the West Bank.

Hamas security forces fired live ammunition in the air to disperse the crowd, hit participants with batons and arrested some of the protesters.

Nearly 2 million Palestinians live in Gaza, one of the most densely populated areas in the world. To keep electric power running round the clock would require 450 to 500 megawatts a day, but the territory receives less than half of that.

Israel supplies 120 megawatts, Egypt supplies 30 megawatts and Gaza’s only power plant, which runs on diesel fuel and was bombed by the Israeli army in 2006 and 2014 and never rebuilt to full capacity, generates 60 megawatts.

The cause of the latest shortages is not entirely clear, but Hamas and the Palestinian Authority blamed each other. Hamas buys diesel from the Palestinian Authority, which taxes the fuel.

Capitalist and middle class families living in wealthy neighborhoods have solar panels, *Al-Monitor* newspaper reported last year. But the panels, rechargeable batteries and transformers that can cost \$1,000 to be able to light a house for eight hours, are beyond the reach of the vast majority.

By Jan. 16 the government of Qatar had come to the rescue of Hamas, sending \$12 million to pay for diesel fuel. The Turkish government also promised aid.

The Israeli government pulled its citizens and military out of Gaza in 2005, turning control over to the Palestinian Authority. The next year Hamas defeated Fatah in elections and then pushed its rivals out in bloody street clashes in 2007.

The people of Gaza have paid a high price for Hamas’ reactionary, anti-working-class program, its calls for the destruction of Israel and its promotion of Jew-hatred, which has brought three wars with Israel in the past 10 years. In the 2014 war Tel Aviv retaliated for missiles Hamas fired into Israel. The Israeli attacks killed more than 2,100, injured some 11,000 and destroyed factories. The casualties were so high because Hamas’ strategy was to place its weapons in working-class neighborhoods, as

well as schools and hospitals.

The Israeli government tightly controls the entry of everything from concrete to medical supplies into the territory, exacerbating shortages. Some 95 percent of water in Gaza isn’t fit to drink, the unemployment rate is over 40 percent, and hospitals face dire shortages of medicines, equipment and supplies.

Every few weeks Salah Haj Yahya and a few other Israeli Arab doctors from Physicians for Human Rights take a mobile clinic to Gaza.

“They [Hamas] can bring out hundreds of thousands of people. But there are many angry people who are very frustrated with Hamas,” Haj Yahya told the Israeli daily *Haaretz* Jan. 7. “Many people tell me they dream of returning to Israel to work, as they once did. They feel that no one cares about them, not the Israelis, not the Egyptians, and not the Palestinian Authority.”

Bosses’ profit drive caused Lac-Mégantic rail disaster

BY JOHN STEELE

“We have a very strong defense, which will show that Harding was not criminally responsible for what happened and get at the truth of who is really responsible for the disaster at Lac-Mégantic,” Thomas Walsh, attorney for locomotive engineer Thomas Harding, told the *Militant* Jan. 5. Because of continual delays, which have stretched over three years, Walsh and Harding had considered demanding the charges be tossed out. “But the people of Lac-Mégantic and Harding want and deserve a trial,” he said.

Harding and train controller Richard Labrie — both members of United Steelworkers Local 1976 — and Jean Demaitre, operations manager for the now defunct Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway, face frame-up charges of 47 counts of criminal negligence in relation to the July 2013 Lac-Mégantic oil train disaster that killed 47 people and burned out the downtown core. If convicted, the three could face life in prison.

Walsh said that at the upcoming Jan. 26-27 court hearing in Sherbrooke, Quebec, he will demand a court order to give the defense access to the original reports and documents that the federal Transportation Safety Board used to prepare its report, as well as a separate English-language trial for Harding.

Since the disaster, the official report of the board and a hard-hitting series of articles in the *Globe and Mail*, Canada’s English-language daily, have shown that the cost-cutting profit drive of the rail bosses, along with complicity from Ottawa’s Transport Canada agency, was the cause of the deadly disaster.

“Company rules prevented Harding from using a 10-second procedure to activate the automatic air brakes that would have prevented the disaster, in order to save 15 minutes of start-up time the next day,” Brian Stevens, National Railway director of Canada’s largest private sector union Unifor, told a Dec. 8 University of Ottawa conference on the Lac-Mégantic disaster.

In addition, company bosses with



AP Photo/Khalil Hamra

Some 10,000 residents in Jabaliya refugee camp demonstrate Jan. 12, one of a series of protests in Gaza Strip against Hamas government reduction of electrical service to four-hour intervals alternating with 12-hour outages in middle of winter. Hamas met actions with attacks and arrests, but were forced to restore power to previous low levels.

permission from Transport Canada forced workers to run the railroad’s trains with only a single person, the engineer.

“Train accidents happen regularly all over the world,” Walsh told *La Tribune Sherbrooke*. “Most of the time it’s the engineer who is fingered in these rail catastrophes.”

The rail bosses’ utter disregard for safety in their drive for profits was highlighted again when Transport Canada officials laid charges Nov. 15 against the Canadian Pacific Railway and two former CP managers under the Railway Safety Act. They are charged with illegally ordering a freight train crew — over strenuous objections from the conductor and engineer — to park a 57-car train carrying dangerous goods on a slope above the town of Revelstoke, British Columbia, and leave it unattended without the handbrakes applied.

This was a direct breach of emergency directives by the government established after the Lac-Mégantic

disaster, Transport Canada says.

The incident took place on Feb. 15, 2015, hours before the Teamsters union strike deadline at the railroad.

Some 3,000 Canadian Pacific rail workers went out on a Canada-wide strike against the rail bosses’ moves that endanger workers and those who live along the tracks. Union pickets wore vests saying “fatigue kills,” pointing to Canadian Pacific’s efforts to increase work hours between rest periods. The union ended the strike after one day when the government threatened to impose strike-breaking legislation.

CP representatives and the two former managers are set to appear in court in Revelstoke Feb. 1.

Solidarity messages for Harding and Labrie can be sent to USW Local 1976 / Section locale 1976, 2360 De Lasalle, Suite 202, Montreal, QC H1V 2L1. Copies should be sent to Thomas Walsh, 165 Rue Wellington N., Suite 310, Sherbrooke, QC Canada J1H 5B9 or thomaswalsh@hotmail.com.

Tennessee woman framed up on abortion charges is released

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — After spending more than a year behind bars on frame-up charges stemming from an alleged attempted self-abortion in September 2015, Anna Yocca walked out of a Murfreesboro, Tennessee, prison Jan. 9. She was released after agreeing to a deal in which she pled guilty to “attempted procurement of a miscarriage.”

“Anna doesn’t face probation, parole or any fines,” Lynn Paltrow, executive director of National Advocates for Pregnant Women, told the *Militant* in a Jan. 10 phone interview. “The plea deal meant that the remaining charges against her were dropped and she was released for time served.”

Yocca worked at an Amazon fulfillment center in Murfreesboro when she was arrested in December 2015. Three months earlier, Tennessee authorities charged, she had attempted “self-

abortion” with a coat hanger at home. Yocca was 24 weeks pregnant at the time. She sought help at a local hospital, where two weeks later doctors delivered a dangerously premature baby boy, weighing 1.5 pounds. The baby faces serious medical problems, and has since been adopted.

Yocca was initially charged with felony attempted murder, with a potential six-year prison term, based on a Tennessee law passed in 2012 that expanded the definition of “personhood” to include a fetus. Similar “feticide” laws are on the books in at least 38 states, part of the ongoing assault on women’s right to choose abortion.

The murder charge against Yocca was reduced to aggravated assault in the spring of 2016. Last November, however, Yocca was hit with three new charges: aggravated assault with a weapon, attempted procurement of a miscarriage.

Continued on page 5

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles around the world!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including strikers at Momenive, California port truckers fighting to be classified as workers, not owners, and United Auto Workers members locked out by Honeywell in Indiana. I invite those involved in workers' battles to contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

— Maggie Trowe

Newark, New Jersey, airport workers rally for higher wages

Hundreds of airport workers and supporters marched through the Newark, New Jersey, airport Jan. 16, Martin Luther King Day, demanding higher pay.

"We don't think it's fair," skycap Nancy Vazquez told the *Militant* in a phone interview. "Workers at JFK and LaGuardia airports in New York make \$11 an hour. We're still making \$10.10, working for the same companies."

Workers at the New York airports received the \$2 increase in the city's minimum wage Jan. 1. It will rise to \$15 an hour at the end of 2018, in response to national protests over this issue.

After a fight by contract workers in collaboration with Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, the Port Authority mandated a \$10.10 wage for airport workers on both sides of the Hudson River in 2014. The \$8.44 New Jersey minimum wage lags far behind New York's.

In December, 8,000 workers employed by private contractors at area airports represented by 32BJ signed their first union contract after a four-year fight. Now more than half of airport contract workers are in the union.

"This is definitely a work in progress," Vazquez said. "We didn't get raises or benefits. But now the companies can't just get rid of whoever they want. We have protection." Workers also won the right to company-provided protective clothing, and will receive schedules a week in advance. Full-time employees are guaranteed 32 hours per week.

— Candace Wagner

West Coast crab fishermen end strike against price cut

HALF MOON BAY, Calif. — Dungeness crab fishermen up and down the California, Oregon and Washington coasts ended their more than one week strike Jan. 6. Northern California crabbers initiated the action in the last days of December when a wholesaler cut the price offered for the traditional holiday delicacy from \$3 to \$2.75 a pound. San Francisco Bay Area fishermen joined in solidarity even though they were still getting the \$3 price.

Oregon fishermen, in talks organized by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, settled for \$2.875 a pound with processors, who imposed this price throughout the West Coast.

Crab fishers — rank and file members of the Half Moon Bay Seafood Marketing Association — at Pillar Point Harbor here told the *Militant* Jan. 19 that their solidarity action with their northern brothers was necessary, but they thought the \$3 price could have been retained given the strength of the coast-wide action.

"It was a total eyesore that we banded together and didn't even get the quarter," fisherman Don Marshall told the *Half Moon Bay Review* Jan. 12. He said he was not happy with the way the negotiation was handled.

Crabber Jimmy Phillips "says that you don't become a crab fisherman to get rich," reported the *Review*. "He says when the stars align properly fishermen might make decent money but that is typically the exception over the rule.

"We work for a loss for a lot of times," Phillips said. "If you were to put an hourly wage on our scale it would be pretty gross."

— Joel Britton

Momentive strikers rally against Wall Street owners



Militant/Jacob Perasso

NEW YORK — A couple hundred strikers and supporters rallied in downtown Manhattan Jan. 13 in support of some 700 workers, members of International Union of Electrical Workers-Communications Workers of America Local 81359, who have been on strike for over two months against Momenive Performance Materials in Waterford, 160 miles north of here. The protest took place outside Apollo Global Management, a \$186 billion private equity firm that owns the majority of the company.

"This company doesn't know what it's up against," Local 81359 President Dominick Patrignini told protesters. "For 73 days we have maintained round-the-clock picket lines. The will of our people will not stop." Several district and local CWA union officers spoke in solidarity with the strikers.

The striking unionists delivered a petition with 4,000 signatures from their community demanding Apollo press company bosses to negotiate a contract.

Local Vice President Darryl Houshower told the *Militant* that Momenive bosses had applied for an injunction against strikers the previous week, but a judge denied it, postponing a decision. In a blow to Momenive's efforts to intimidate and restrict strikers, the Saratoga County Sheriff's Department pulled their officers off the picket lines Jan. 16, Patrignani said.

— JACOB PERASSO

Woman framed up on abortion charges is released

Continued from page 4

riage, and attempted criminal abortion. The latter two charges are part of Tennessee's criminal abortion code dating back to the late 1800s.

Yocca's bail was set at \$200,000 at the time of her arrest. Because she was unable to pay the bond, she remained in the Rutherford County Adult Detention Center this entire time, even though she was never tried or convicted of anything.

Yocca was not the first woman in the United States to be imprisoned on feticide charges. On Sept. 1, 2016, Purvi Patel of South Bend, Indiana, was re-

leased from the state women's prison in Indianapolis after being convicted a year and a half earlier under Indiana's feticide law. The prosecution charged she had used abortion drugs bought online to murder her fetus. She was also found guilty of child neglect when she gave birth to a stillborn child.

During her trial, Patel said she had put it in a dumpster behind her family's restaurant in an effort to hide the pregnancy from her family. She was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

The Indiana Court of Appeals vacated the two contradictory convictions

in July 2016. The judges ruled that the state's feticide law wasn't meant to be used to prosecute women for their own abortions, but rather to prosecute people who attacked pregnant women.

However, they also ruled that Patel could be resentenced on a lower-level child neglect charge.

She remained in prison while the State Attorney General's Office contemplated an appeal. When the attorney general decided not to, a St. Joseph County judge resentenced Patel to 18 months of prison time, less time than she had already served, and she was released.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 7, 1992

PEORIA, Ill. — Some 5,000 people gathered for a rally here January 26 to support the fight by the United Auto Workers for a contract at Caterpillar.

The rally was organized by United Auto Workers Local 974, which represents the 8,000 workers at the massive Caterpillar complex across the Illinois river in East Peoria. It was one of a series of rallies being organized by the union locals at Caterpillar plants across the country this week.

Caterpillar has refused to negotiate with the UAW. The union called a selective strike involving 400 workers in East Peoria and 2,000 in Decatur, Illinois. In retaliation, the company locked out 6,000 workers here.

While the majority of the participants were Caterpillar workers on strike or locked out, there were also Caterpillar workers still on the job.



February 6, 1967

During his recent visit to Puerto Rico, Stokely Carmichael, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, concluded an agreement of mutual support and solidarity between his organization and the two leading pro-independence organizations of Puerto Rico, the Movement for Puerto Rican Independence (MPI), and the Federation of University Students for Independence (FUPI).

Carmichael's press statement [said]: "Brothers, we see our struggle linked to the struggles of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America against foreign oppression, particularly by the United States. We all have the same enemy. For this reason, we strongly support your just struggle for independence. For this reason we support all peoples who are struggling for self-determination."



February 7, 1942

Fraud is the only word to describe the War-Time Price Control Bill signed last week by President Roosevelt.

Instead of halting price inflation, this measure will induce further price rises and protect the price-fixing practices of the big monopolies. It will give a legal cover to price-gouging.

Not even its sponsors have been able to say an unconditionally kind word for it.

The Office of Price Administration stated that it expected "nothing sweeping or radical" from the measure, but that it might have a "psychological" effect on manufacturers and merchants to curb their prices. The real "psychological" effect intended, however, is to deceive the workers and poor farmers into the belief that "something is being done" to protect them from inflation and its attendant war profiteering.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

UNITED KINGDOM Manchester

Trump's Inauguration: Why the Propertied Rulers Fear Working People. Speaker: Caroline Bellamy, Communist League. Fri., Feb. 3, 7 p.m. Donation: £2.50. Room 301, Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St. M1 2EH. Tel.: (016) 1478 2496.

Trump moves to White House

Continued from front page

gage in ceaseless efforts to maximize their own profits the world over,” wrote Socialist Workers Party leader Steve Clark in the introduction to *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. “Growing carnage and the dispossession of millions of human beings is the result.”

Workers’ anger at the impact of the deepening capitalist crisis of jobs, production, trade and finance became the central question in the 2016 election, leading to irreparable political instability in both capitalist parties.

After his victory, the Republican Party is being rebuilt around Trump. The Democrats face a deeper crisis. Many, including former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and most of the left, demand a “revolution” in the party, looking to take it over and install a more progressive capitalist reform program.

“The old guard of the Democratic party has to go,” left-wing filmmaker and Sanders supporter Michael Moore told a rally the night of the inauguration. “They are supported by corporate America. We need new leadership, new blood and young people.” Moore predicted Trump’s victory after the Republican National Convention last summer.

These forces, along with the editors of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, CNN and other liberal media, along with the bulk of the federal bureaucracy, and the millions of professionals, academics, and others that make up the cosmopolitan meritocracy, are waging political war against the new president.

Trump takes office

In his first few days in office Trump issued a series of executive orders rescinding steps taken by former President Barack Obama and pushed a number of his cabinet nominees through. He met with a delegation of CEOs of auto, computer, steel, aerospace and other industrial giants, pressing them to put more investment into plant and production inside U.S. borders, while assuring them his administration would take steps to remove regulatory restrictions on the bosses to bolster their profits.

He also convened a meeting with half a dozen construction union officials, who agree with Trump on advancing certain “infrastructure” projects, including construction of the Keystone and Dakota Access oil pipelines. The latter has been fought by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in North Dakota, backed by thousands of Native Americans and others, seeking to defend the tribe’s water sources and sacred burial sites.

In another executive order, Trump signaled intent to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, calling on gov-

ernment agencies to minimize the act’s “unwarranted economic and regulatory burdens,” like the penalty for those who can’t prove they are unable to pay.

The Senate overwhelmingly approved nominations of former Marine generals James Mattis as Secretary of Defense and John Kelly as Secretary of Homeland Security. Mattis announced plans for an Asian trip with stops in Japan and South Korea. Trump has sharpened the stance toward the capitalist rulers in China over trade and other matters.

Trump signed a memorandum withdrawing the U.S. from the 5,500-page Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal. What the rulers call “trade pacts” or “free trade” are in fact massive sets of agreements between rival imperialist powers dividing up arenas for investment, trade and exploitation of wage labor, with the strongest calling the shots.

Trump contacted the heads of state of Mexico and Canada and said he wants to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, a champion of the labor officialdom’s class-collaborationist policies, praised the president’s “America First” moves on trade as good for workers, calling them “just the first in a series of neces-

López: Step up fight to end US colonial rule

Continued from front page

Florida; and in Cuba. Many also plan to stay vigilant until he actually walks free. In New York, 35 Women for Oscar López will rally and celebrate Jan. 29 in Times Square.

“Everyone is happy. It demonstrated the strength the people have when we are united,” cattle rancher Armando Arcelay said by phone from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico.

“My father emphatically wanted me to publicly thank all the Puerto Rican people, the people of Latin America and especially Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua,” Oscar’s daughter Clarisa López told a press conference in San Juan.

At the Jan. 17 volleyball finals in San Sebastián, Puerto Rico, where López was born, the fans only wanted to talk about the news of his impending release, reported *El Nuevo Día*.

“I can’t imagine 35 years in prison, much less all those years in solitary,” Sergio Obell Cruz told the paper. “We will be waiting here for him with a huge party.”

López, 74, moved to Chicago when he was 14. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1965 and sent to Vietnam. By the time he returned to Chicago he was an opponent of the war and joined fights against discrimination in hiring and housing, against police brutality, for bilingual education and for independence for Puerto Rico.

In the 1960s and ’70s, support for independence grew among Puerto Ricans on the island and in the U.S., inspired by the 1959 Cuban Revolution. One of the FBI’s largest Cointelpro disruption campaigns targeted independence supporters and unionists on the island.

In 1980, 10 Puerto Rican independentistas were arrested in the U.S. and accused of being members of the Armed Forces of National Liberation, a group which took credit for bombings of businesses with investments in Puerto Rico.

On May 28, 1981, López was arrested and accused of being a leader of the group. With no evidence that he had



Reuters/Shannon Stapleton

Workers waiting to enter job fair in Uniondale, New York, October 2014. Capitalist rulers and both their parties fear millions of workers angry about bleak conditions they face.

sary policy changes required to build a fair and just global economy.”

Trump campaigned promising to negotiate bilateral agreements good for “all Americans.” But the U.S. is divided into two sharply conflicting classes, and whether the rulers choose “free trade” or protectionism to defend their profits, workers go to the wall.

While the Trump administration’s moves on trade and infrastructure may

aid today’s anemic uptick in the business cycle, no policy of any wing of the capitalist rulers can turn around the long-term contraction of production and trade. The workings of the capitalist system, exacerbated by the political turmoil and ongoing wars that mark today’s world, ensure that another sharp downturn like the 1987 stock market crash or the 2008 real estate bubble collapse looms on the horizon.

participated in any violent action, U.S. prosecutors made their main charge against him “seditious conspiracy.”

López and the others, arguing they were prisoners of war, refused to take part in the trials. All were found guilty.

In 1999 President Bill Clinton pardoned most of the Puerto Rican political prisoners, but López did not accept because two prisoners, Carlos Alberto Torres and Haydée Beltrán, were not included. Beltrán was freed in 2009 and Torres in 2010.

After Torres’ release the campaign to free López picked up steam. In May 2013 thousands protested in Puerto Rico. Similar actions took place in the U.S. and Cuba.

Widespread support to free Oscar

Leaders of the Catholic Church and other religious denominations in Puerto Rico, the U.S. colony’s main capitalist political parties, trade unions in Puerto Rico and the U.S., and prominent individuals around the world, including Bishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa and Pope Francis, were among the many who called on the U.S. government to free López.

The fight got a boost with the release of the last of the Cuban Five in December 2014. The five revolutionaries spent up to 16 years in jail in the U.S. on frame-up charges of “conspiracy to commit espionage” because of their work to protect Cuba from violent attacks by counterrevolutionaries based in the U.S.

El Nuevo Día spoke with Fernando González, one of the Five, who is now vice president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, during a celebration in Havana Jan. 17. González shared a cell with López in Terre Haute, Indiana, for four years.

“This is a great victory for the people of Puerto Rico and all those with a good heart throughout the world,” González said. He saluted López’s “resistance, his revolutionary caliber and his steadfastness in what he believes.”

Fight for independence

The victory for López takes place as the Fiscal Oversight Board appointed by Obama continues to press the colonial regime to slash health care, welfare, pensions and wages. Many in the capitalist class in Puerto Rico worry that López’s return could strengthen the fight for independence and against the fiscal board’s shock therapy.

Once he is released López plans to visit all 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico to thank people for their support and promote the fight to end colonial status.

In a Jan. 23 column José Saldaña, former University of Puerto Rico president, smeared López as a terrorist and argued against those who support independence. “Patrioteers who are using Oscar are trying to sell us the illusion of a free and sovereign homeland,” he wrote. “They don’t tell you that this will risk your U.S. citizenship, there won’t be Medicare or Medicaid.”

In a letter to a supporter in May 2015, López noted that Cuba before the revolution was “a nation in shambles, with an economy in chaos and responding primarily to the economic interests of the USA, [and] a poor educational system.” Today it is a “beacon of hope and an example to emulate” and “it is the most literate country in all the Caribbean and Latin America.”

At a Jan. 21 celebration at the community center El Maestro in the Bronx, Ana López, a leader of the New York Coordinator to Free Oscar López, read an email he sent her from prison. “Now more than ever we must work for the future of our beloved homeland,” he said. “We can decolonize our people and our nation and transform it into the edenic garden it has the potential of being.”

“Oscar should never have been in prison,” Rafael Cancel Miranda, who spent 25 years in jail in the U.S. for his actions in defense of independence for Puerto Rico, told the *Militant* by phone Jan. 23. “Fighting for independence is not a crime. The criminal is U.S. imperialism and colonialism.”

Paying Tribute to Fidel Castro

Celebrating the life of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution

Sat., Feb. 4, 7-9:30 p.m.

New York City

Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz Center

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New York Cuba Solidarity Project

Info: (718) 601-4751, nycsproject.org

Tribute to Fidel Castro in DC

Continued from front page

Cuban workers and youth, in their millions, reaffirmed their commitment to Cuba's socialist revolution and its values, he continued, "They know they have something to contribute — that is how Fidel educated us. For many years, he told us, if at some point you are isolated, anywhere in the world, you will be your own comandante. You will know what to do, and how to do it. You will also know that our revolution will never forget you. Fidel said the Cuban Five would return, and we won their freedom."

Miguel Fraga, first secretary of the Cuban Embassy, accompanied Cabañas and was introduced at the meeting.

Other speakers included Gnaka Lagoke, founder of Revival of Panafrikanism Forum, who chaired; José Pertierra, a Cuban-American attorney who represented Juan Miguel González, father of Elián González; Dr. Piero Gleijeses, professor at John Hopkins University and author of *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*; Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and president of Pathfinder Press; Heather Benno, ANSWER Coalition and Party of Socialism and Liberation; Jennifer Bryant, an organizer for the Venceremos Brigade; and Netfa Freeman, International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity, Pan African Community Action, and Institute for Policy Studies. Carlos Ron, consul at the Venezuelan Embassy, gave greetings.

"In the years to come, we will need more meetings about the Cuban Revolution in more countries, especially in Africa," said Lagoke, who has organized annual meetings to discuss Africa and the Cuban Revolution.

People came from the Washington, D.C., area, Philadelphia, New York, and as far away as Chicago.

The internationalist solidarity that binds revolutionary Cuba and Africa was a central theme of the meeting. "Fidel is our link to Africa. For us in Cuba, Africa is not something else, we are Africans," Cabañas said to applause.

"Fidel was a Pan Africanist of the highest order and Cuba's solidarity and footprint in the Pan African movement goes all the way back to the '60s," said Netfa Freeman. During Algeria's war for independence against French colo-

nialism, the revolutionary leadership in Cuba sent ships to take weapons to the Algerian National Liberation Front and bring war orphans and wounded children to the island for treatment and education, just two years after their own revolutionary victory, he said.

José Pertierra recounted how during a Christmas day lunch at Fidel's home in 2010, Fidel got on the phone with volunteer Cuban doctors combatting a cholera epidemic in Haiti. "He talked to them like a general who was moving troops from one place to another giving them courage and enthusiasm," he said.

A number of speakers described the decisive role of some 425,000 Cuban internationalists battling alongside Angolan and Namibian forces in a hard-fought war for freedom against South African apartheid invaders and their backers in Washington. The struggle began in 1975 as Angola won independence from Portugal and lasted for sixteen years.

"Cuba's example was unprecedented. They were not guided by narrow self-interest, but by Castro's sense of revolutionary mission. His internationalism trumped everything else," Piero Gleijeses said. Fidel called the fight to defeat apartheid "the most beautiful cause of humanity."

In face of growing U.S. military threats in the 1980s, Cuba refused to pull back or withdraw from Angola, he said, even when it meant rejecting the course of the leaders of the Soviet Union, who were focused on achieving detente with Washington. "When President Jimmy Carter offered to re-establish relations with Cuba if Cuba would withdraw from Angola, Cuba said no," Gleijeses said. "The wave of the Cuban victory in Angola washed over the region."

Fidel belongs to Cuba, the world

"Fidel belongs first and foremost to the men and women of Cuba. But he also belongs to the working people of the world," SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters said. "He demonstrated in action what proletarian internationalism means, and how and why it is inseparable from the socialist revolution in Cuba and the strengthening of that revolution.

It was Fidel's historical understanding that the struggle in southern Africa would last until apartheid was defeated, and only its defeat would guarantee the sovereignty and independence of An-



Le Canal Nabo News

"We will need more meetings about the Cuban Revolution, especially in Africa," said Gnaka Lagoke, founder of Revival of Panafrikanism Forum and chair of D.C. tribute to Fidel Castro. To Lagoke's left is José Pertierra, Cuban-American attorney who represented Juan González, father of Elián González; to his right, Jennifer Bryant, an organizer for Venceremos Brigade.

gola, Waters explained. "Fidel was one of the great military commanders of the toilers of the world. He understood that military leadership of the working class in revolutionary struggle begins with political leadership. That above all is decisive," said Waters.

"There were two great socialist revolutions of the 20th century — the Russian and the Cuban," Waters said. "Neither was the product of any one individual — they grew out of the conditions created by capitalism itself. But without the presence and political leadership of Lenin and Fidel, in those revolutions at decisive moments and turning points, the odds that either one of them would have triumphed are small."

"There are times when the role of an individual in history is decisive. Fidel's ability to lead the other leaders at key turning points was crucial," she said. "Without Lenin and Fidel, the history of the 20th century and 21st century would be hard to imagine. It's why those two giants tower above all others and why we think of them together. They knew that only by eradicating capitalist relations could a new order be built."

Two different courses were presented at the meeting on how to defend revolutionary Cuba today. Some speakers argued that "stopping" new U.S. President Donald Trump is paramount.

The Trump agenda is to smash labor unions, abolish environmental regulations, carry out mass deportations and unleash massive attacks on women's rights, Heather Benno argued. "His goal is to return the United States to the most unrestrained form of capitalist rule — with no protections for oppressed sectors," she said. "Protesting Trump is the heart and soul of El Comandante's legacy."

She urged participants to join in a Jan. 20 protest organized by the ANSWER Coalition seeking to disrupt Trump's inauguration.

"We're not only protesting Trump, we're protesting the system that allowed Trump to be elected to head the largest imperialist war-mongering country in the world," Jennifer Bryant said.

"Our responsibility here is to keep our fire on the U.S. government," Waters countered, in response to a question during the discussion that ensued. "Whether the president is Trump or

Clinton or Obama or another capitalist politician, the propertied families who dictate Washington's foreign policy have worked consistently for decades to destroy the revolution, regardless of tactical shifts or which capitalist party held the presidency. We need to build a movement to demand that the U.S. return Guantánamo now, right now, end their economic embargo and end their subversive 'regime change' programs.

"The U.S. rulers fear the example of Cuba's socialist revolution, and for the first time in decades they have begun to fear the U.S. working class," she said. "Workers here have the same capacities to transform ourselves and we're capable of taking power and transforming society."

During the far-reaching hourlong discussion, speaker after speaker pointed to examples of Cuba's internationalism, from aid to Venezuela in its efforts to resist Washington's attacks to its response to the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa. The back and forth continued informally over a delicious West African dinner.

Participants picked up 13 copies of *Cuba and Angola: The War for Freedom*, Pathfinder's newly released first-hand account of the Cuban internationalist mission in Angola, by Harry Villegas, a brigadier general of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) who served as Fidel Castro's direct liaison to Cuban forces there.

"The whole meeting was eye-opening and inspiring, including the books," Bryan Carrigan, a warehouse worker and Teamster, told the *Militant*. "I didn't know Cuba had helped in Africa, like in Angola, and stayed for the long haul."



Militant/Glova Scott

"The U.S. rulers fear the Cuban Revolution, and for the first time in decades they have begun to fear the U.S. working class," SWP leader Mary-Alice said at tribute to Fidel Castro.

The Cuban Revolution in World Politics

Cuba & Angola The War for Freedom

Harry Villegas ("Pombo")

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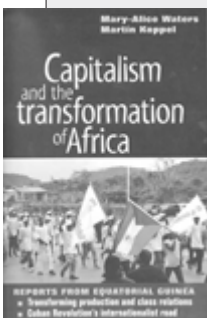
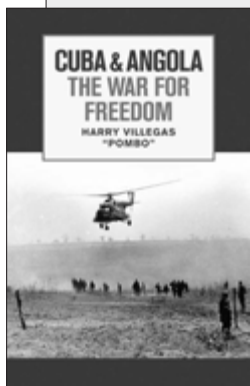
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Socialist Workers Party convention sets course to build revolutionary party workers need today

BY NAOMI CRAINE
AND JOHN STUDER

NEW YORK — The Socialist Workers Party held its 48th Constitutional Convention here Jan. 14-16, setting a course to advance carrying out propaganda activity in the working class at workers’ doorsteps, on strike picket lines and in other labor fights and social protests. Through this work, the party seeks to broaden its geographical reach, the number of workers and youth the party is working with and to win new members.

In addition to delegations from party branches, convention delegates included members who have moved to Denver, northern New Jersey and the area around Albany, New York, to extend party-building work in those areas. Along with branches of the SWP across the U.S. and of the Communist League in Canada, they will be joining other workers to run candidates backed by the party for mayor and other offices this year. (See list on page 3.)

For years workers have faced slow-burning depression conditions as the capitalists’ profit rates have continued their decadeslong decline, Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary, said in the opening political report. As prospects have shrunk for profitable investment in the expansion of factory buildings, mines, equipment, and jobs, the employers have sat on growing hoards of cash or plowed it into stocks, bonds and other forms of speculative financial paper. At an accelerated pace, this has increased the relative weight of money capital at the expense of manufacturing capital.

In 2008 a deep global financial crisis and contraction of production and trade shook capitalism on a world scale. The employers and their government continue to load the devastating consequences of that crisis — the “carnage” referred to by the newly elected U.S. president at his inauguration a few days after the SWP convention — onto the backs of working people.



Militant photos
Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes, left, speaks to delegates and observers at party’s 48th Constitutional Convention.

This crisis for the working class became the central factor in the 2016 presidential campaign. The SWP said there were two classes and three parties — the capitalists had their Democrats and Republicans, Barnes said, and working people had the Socialist Workers Party.

And the capitalist rulers increasingly displayed fear of the working class, seeing a future of deeper class struggle to come as the carnage continues and spreads.

Hillary Clinton revealed her anti-working-class contempt when she called millions of workers “deplorable” because many of them backed Donald Trump in hopes he would address the worsening economic and social conditions they face — a decline in the size of the working class as jobs disappear, falling real wages, cop brutality, attacks

on women’s right to choose abortion, multiple deployments for workers in uniform sent to fight and die in Washington’s wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and more. While Trump claimed he spoke for working people, he demagogically targeted Mexicans, Muslims, women, unionists and others, aiming to divide and weaken the working class and our unions.

The only way forward for workers and working farmers, Barnes said, is to recognize ourselves as the political vanguard of the “deplorable” — to see the need and capacity of the working class and our allies to put an end to the rule of capital, of the small handful of super-rich families that hold state power in the U.S. and control both the Democratic and Republican parties.

That’s the reason to join the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP is the only party armed with a communist course of carrying out regular propaganda activity in the working class and joining in fights by workers and the oppressed, as the party politically prepares for the bigger class battles and revolutionary struggles we know are coming.

For years SWP members have found growing interest as they knock on doors in working-class neighborhoods to discuss the party and its activities. Although there are no sustained labor battles or social movements like the civil rights battle that overthrew Jim Crow segregation, many workers respond when party members explain the need for the working class to chart a course to build our own political party to take power.

Convention delegates discussed and adopted the next decisive steps to sustain, as the axis of party activity, turning that interest among working people into expanded influence and recruitment.

The party leadership has worked with a number of members to move to new areas where the SWP has made contacts, Barnes explained. Together with adjustments in organization and priorities in party branches to enable members to step up political campaigning and use of the *Militant* and books and magazines on communist politics among workers, these moves can lead to a convergence of political activity in the branches, in new areas — and by new party members.

In addition, Barnes told convention participants, there are new openings today for party members to conduct political activity in the unions. This is particularly true among rail freight workers, where dangerous conditions — from the one-person operating crew on a growing number of freight trains, to long and erratic work schedules, to moving trains in crowded rail yards with remote-control units — have led to widespread discussion and protests. This is part of the fight against the bosses’ speedup, job combinations, and assaults on safety among all workers.

Running candidates for public office is important to party-building today, Barnes said. Most workers continue to see politics through the framework of the elections. Communist campaigns have already been launched across the U.S. and Canada, running for mayor in Calgary, Alberta; Los Angeles; Miami; Minneapolis; Montreal; New York; and Seattle.

To be effective in this work, Barnes said, requires increasing attention to political education. Class conscious workers need to dig into lessons from the founding of the modern revolutionary workers movement in the mid-1800s; to the Bolshevik revolution under the leadership of V.I. Lenin (this year is its 100th anniversary); of the Cuban Revolution, the living socialist revolution to our south; to experiences of the SWP in trying to build that kind of party here in the U.S. together with communist workers the world over.

Crisis of U.S. two-party system

The victory of Trump in the U.S. presidential election reflects the deepening economic and political crisis of U.S. imperialism — and a resulting historic shake-up in its two long-standing bourgeois political parties.

The Republicans are being remade by Donald Trump, a multibillionaire pretending to speak in the interests of working people while seeking to find policies that further enrich the capitalist class, in a futile attempt to end the inevitable crisis of their system. This has nothing to do with hysteria about “fascism” among liberal and middle-class radicals, Barnes said. In fact, the Trump electoral victory is weakening already marginal ultrarightist currents, who are unable to gain any traction in U.S. politics.

The Democrats are in disarray. Bernie Sanders and bourgeois and petty-

bourgeois leftists of every stripe on one side, and machine politicians like New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo on the other, are already maneuvering to take over the party in hopes of making a comeback in the 2018 and 2020 elections.

Similar capitalist-crisis-fueled political breakups are unfolding in the United Kingdom, France and other imperialist countries in Europe and beyond.

Since 1990 the Socialist Workers Party has explained the global reverberations of the fact that U.S. imperialism lost the Cold War.

As a byproduct of the implosion of the Soviet Union and other Stalinist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe by the opening of the 1990s, there was a rapid disintegration of the counterrevolutionary obstacle of governments and parties that falsely called themselves Communist and for decades had politically misled and undercut working-class and popular struggles around the globe. As a result, while the working class worldwide today has no mass independent class leadership, it faces coming class battles unbroken and free of Stalinist disorientation, something that wasn’t true for decades. Washington hadn’t “won” the Cold War.

The U.S. rulers acted on an opposite assumption. They were convinced they had triumphed and had a free hand worldwide. They intervened in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere — with disastrous results for toilers in those regions and seemingly endless military involvement for Washington.

Another side of these developments is now becoming clearer, Barnes said. The U.S.-dominated NATO military alliance has been weakened. The illusion is coming apart that an “ever closer” economic and political European Union could transcend the nation states within it — most of them imperialist powers, but at very different levels of economic might and social conditions — and become a united capitalist Europe.

Sharpening competition among rival ruling classes under the pressure of the international slowdown in capitalist production and trade is undoing what many bourgeois politicians refer to as “globalization,” including so-called trade pacts in Europe, North America, and the Pacific and Asia. These classless terms are cover for the profit-driven efforts of finance capital to compete to exploit workers and farmers and suck the wealth they produce with their labor from every corner of the globe.

Delegates at the SWP convention seated international fraternal delegations, including from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, France and the U.K. They



Reuters
Afghans protest killing of residents in U.S.-led raids in Taloqan, Afghanistan, May 2011. World capitalist economic crisis and seemingly unending wars have had devastating impact on workers worldwide.



Militant photos: Left, Lea Sherman; right, Edwin Fruit
Delegates discussed importance of communist election campaigns. Left, Osborne Hart, SWP candidate for New York mayor, at Jan. 21 women’s march there. Right, Seattle SWP mayoral candidate Mary Martin (at left) and campaign supporter Leah O’Conner (right) campaign door to door.

shared experiences that underscored that the party-building openings discussed at the convention are worldwide.

Books to prepare us to fight and win

The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record is one of three books published by Pathfinder Press in 2016 “to help working people address the far-reaching political questions that we and others in the working class need answers to in order to fight more effectively and win,” Steve Clark said in the introduction to the *Clinton’s Anti-Working-Class Record*. The other titles are: *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism*, also by Jack Barnes, and *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible? A Necessary Debate Among Working People* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters.

In addition to English, Spanish and French, these books, and others from Pathfinder Press’ arsenal, “are right now being translated in Iran into the Farsi language,” Clark wrote. “They will be distributed widely in bookshops and libraries there and well beyond Iran’s borders. Their broad circulation demonstrates how the scope and explosiveness of the capitalist crisis, and the response of working people to its consequences, are truly worldwide.”

In a report to the convention, Clark expanded on these points. These books and more than 40 other Farsi-language Pathfinder titles are finding a growing readership across Iran and beyond, including in Afghanistan and the Kurdish region of Iraq.

Workers and farmers in the Middle East face the effects of the world capitalist economic crisis, compounded by the impact of a devastating civil war in Syria, more than a decade of bloody wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the advancing Kurdish struggle for national rights, Clark said. This has sparked interest in books that present the program and history of the Socialist Workers Party, as well as the Russian and Cuban revolutions.

Convention delegates also discussed the importance of the fight against Jew-hatred. History shows that assaults on Jews increase in times of capitalist crisis, as the rulers seek scapegoats to divert the middle classes and layers of toilers from recognizing the true source of their worsening conditions, the profit system. Clark reviewed the decadeslong continuity of the SWP on this question, and that of Fidel Castro and the leadership of Cuba’s socialist revolution, from the impact of the rise of Nazism, the horror of the Holocaust during the second imperialist world war, to growing attacks on Jews and Muslims today as

capitalism’s devastation extends to more and more of the world.

Revolutionaries must push for recognition of the right of Israel to exist, Clark said, including the right of return for Jews looking for refuge from persecution, as well as for recognition of a state for the dispossessed Palestinian people. This is the only way to open the space for working people who are Arab and Jewish to build solidarity and fight together against capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression throughout the region.

‘Two great socialist revolutions’

Convention delegates also discussed a Nov. 27 letter from SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes to Raúl Castro, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, marking the political legacy of Fidel Castro, on the occasion of his death Nov. 25 (see Dec. 12, 2016, *Militant*). The message highlighted the two great socialist revolutions of the 20th century, in Russia and Cuba, and the indispensable leadership of them by V.I. Lenin and Fidel Castro.

Barnes wrote that the SWP will continue to “publish and spread the truth about the Cuban Revolution and Fidel’s leadership, to make it known to working people in the United States and throughout the world. With unshakable confidence in the working class and its allies, we will continue to organize and act on the course Fidel uncompromisingly presented to the world in 1961, a month before the victorious battle of Playa Giron: ‘There will be a victorious revolution in the United States before a victorious counterrevolution in Cuba.’”

Mary-Alice Waters spoke to this in her convention report on “Party-Building and the Cuban Revolution.” The working-class mobilizations in tribute to Fidel Castro across Cuba following his death, and Raúl Castro’s speeches in Havana and Santiago, demonstrates once again that the socialist revolution in Cuba lives and fights to this day. The Socialist Workers Party defends that revolution and champions the fight to end the U.S. embargo, to get Washington out of Guantánamo and return it to Cuban sovereignty, and to end Washington’s “regime-change” policies.

One of the party’s priorities in the coming months, Waters said, will be working to build a brigade of workers to visit Cuba for the May Day celebration in Havana, to learn firsthand about the gains working people made through their socialist revolution. This includes a chance for some to also participate in a May 4-6 conference and related activities in Guantánamo, near the base occupied by Washington for over a century.

The party and the Young Socialists are also building the World Festival of Youth and Students taking place in Sochi, Russia, Oct. 14-22. This presents another opportunity to work with youth around the world looking for ways to fight against imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation.

Waters noted increasing interest in books published by Pathfinder. There are new openings to get these books into workers hands internationally. She pointed to growing interest across Africa, including in South Africa, in Namibia — a former colony of South Africa whose independence was won as a result of revolutionary Cuba’s internationalist mission in Angola aiding those fighting the apartheid army — in Tanzania, and in West Africa. Bookstore orders for Pathfinder’s books containing speeches of Thomas Sankara, leader of the 1983-87 popular revolution in Burkina Faso, are growing there.

This is deeply connected to the work of the SWP and Communist Leagues, she said, as growing numbers of toilers from Africa who have come to the imperialist centers in North America and Europe to work and study look to learn more about politics.

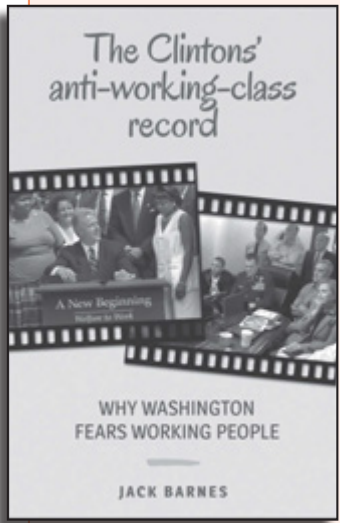
Among those invited to attend the convention, in addition to members of the SWP and Communist Leagues, were a number of people from across

Continued on page 11

For the first time in decades, the US rulers have begun to fear the working class

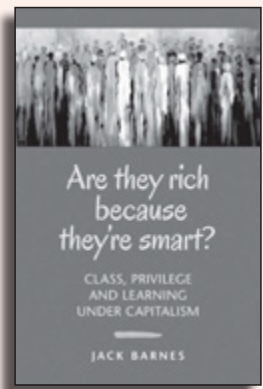
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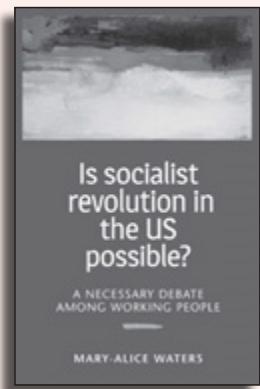


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Are They Rich Because They’re Smart? and Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible? \$7 each or \$5 each with a subscription to the Militant.

‘Washington never accepted the Cuban Revolution’

Nothing Can Stop the Course of History, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January, contains excerpts from an interview Cuban leader Fidel Castro gave to Professor Jeffrey M. Elliot and U.S. Congressman Mervyn M. Dymally. First published in 1985 by Editora Politica (Havana, Cuba), the nine-day interview spans dozens of topics, including U.S.-Cuban relations, the role of the individual in history, the moral and political qualities of leadership, Cuba's fight to defend Angolan sovereignty against attacks by apartheid South Africa and more. The piece below is from the section "U.S.-Cuban relations/Cuba's international principles and peaceful coexistence." Copyright © 1986 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FIDEL CASTRO

In my view, the United States is responsible for the present situation. It has never wanted to accept the existence of the Cuban revolution or the establishment of a social system that is different from its own. The United States never cared about the existence of dishonest, tyrannical governments in this country — governments that killed thousands of people and stole huge sums of money. It never cared about this country's poverty, ignorance, unsanitary conditions, or the lack of schools, hospitals,



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From beginning, "U.S. set about trying to destroy the revolution in Cuba," said Fidel Castro, central leader of 1959 Cuban Revolution, using "the most insulting and slanderous campaigns, plans of subversion, acts of sabotage that killed many people, mercenary invasions." Above, Castro, center in glasses, directs response to U.S.-backed invasion at Bay of Pigs, April 1961.

and medical services. It never really cared about the unemployment, racial discrimination, and enormous social problems in our country. It never cared. These were never reasons for concern or for blockades against Cuba.

Then, when a revolution took place that put an end to those problems, the United States set about trying to destroy the revolution in Cuba. That's really the origin of some of the problems. It is also what, ever since the very beginning, has brought about all kinds of measures — from the most insulting and slanderous campaigns against Cuba, to plans of subversion, the organization of armed bands, acts of sabotage that killed many people, mercenary invasions, the cancellation of the sugar quota that Cuba had had for 100 years, the economic blockade, the policy of isolation, plans of aggression, and assassination attempts against the leaders of our revolution. It's an endless list of U.S. actions against our country. Plus there is the maintenance of a military base by force, against the will of our people. That is what lies behind these divisions.

Naturally, this has caused great indignation among our people and their strong repudiation of all those policies. However, we haven't attempted to blockade the United States or engaged in other acts of aggression against that country. No, it has been the United States which has done so against

Cuba. If the United States doesn't change those policies, I don't see how these differences can be overcome. I state categorically that we aren't the ones responsible for the current situation. ...

I remember when, over a year ago, the representatives of the creditor governments met here. They were all given a document that attacked Cuba's arguments for rescheduling the debt. We had a copy of that document, too, and, in our discussions with the bankers, I showed it to them and asked, "Isn't it a shame that the United States is attempting to block all this?"

That is, the Reagan administration has implemented a constant policy. Not only does the U.S. blockade ban all trade between the United States and Cuba, it even bans trade in medicine. This is shameful! We can't get a single aspirin from the United States; it is legally forbidden. Medicines that may save many human lives are forbidden. No medical equipment can be exported from the United States to Cuba. Trade is also prohibited in both directions. The United States has also expanded its boycott throughout the world, as part of its policy of unceasing harassment — shameful and infamous harassment — against Cuba's economic operations. ...

Cuba was the most secure, docile, and best indoctrinated colony of the United States. The Cuban people were

considered to have no desire to work and no patriotic feelings and to be perfectly indoctrinated in anticommunism and antisocialism, totally impervious to a revolution by virtue of U.S. ideology and culture. I believe that, at present, the United States would have no reason to underestimate the Cuban people. During these past twenty-six years, Cuba has shown what a Latin American people is capable of doing; that this mixture of Spaniards, Africans, and Indians has far greater political, organizational, and combat capacity than the United States ever imagined.

We are no different and no better than the Central Americans, the South Americans, or the rest of the Latin Americans. No, I consider that they have the same potential qualities we had, and perhaps even more. The day came when we rebelled and resolved — despite the risks and at all costs — to follow our own independent path and carry out the social changes we have undertaken. Those problems can't be solved by force or by arms. ...

If the United States believes it is entitled to intervene in Grenada, Santo Domingo, and Nicaragua — to wage a dirty war in the latter — then we cannot be friends. If the United States feels it is entitled to overthrow the Arbenz government in Guatemala and the Allende government in Chile, or to promote the overthrow of Goulart in Brazil, then we cannot be friends. If, furthermore, the United States declares, as it did a while ago, that the Western world should be thankful to Pinochet for overthrowing the constitutional government elected by the people in Chile, thankful for the overthrow and death of Allende, for the rivers of blood shed since, and for the untold suffering it entailed for the people there, what should we do? Keep our mouths shut and not speak about those things? Not denounce those things, so as to have good relations with the United States? There are economic, political, and moral problems — all very serious — and we feel it is our duty to denounce them before the United Nations, before all international organizations everywhere.

Can we then compromise on these things? I think that there may be topics, different types of questions on which compromises can be made. But on these really basic questions which involve the reality we are witnessing, concessions are impossible.

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Step up fight to free Leonard Peltier!

Barack Obama exposed the true face of liberal “democracy” by refusing to release Leonard Peltier, a Native American activist framed up on charges of killing two FBI agents during a shootout on the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation in South Dakota in 1975. Obama denied his request for clemency on Jan. 18, just two days before his term expired.

Peltier, who has serious health problems, has been in jail more than 40 years, six of them in solitary confinement.

The frame-up was so blatant that even James Reynolds, one of the lead prosecutors who helped send Peltier to prison, has called for his release. The trial “was unusually troublesome” Reynolds now says. “It was a very thin case that likely would not be upheld by courts today.”

Peltier and other members of the American Indian Movement were at Pine Ridge to protect residents from a reign of terror, including beatings and murders, instituted by then tribal chief Dick Wilson. Reynolds admits that the FBI played a “role in the creation of dangerous conditions on Pine Ridge.”

Among those calling for Peltier’s release are the National Congress of American Indians, the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the World Council of Churches, the European Parliament, Amnesty International and Pope

Francis. The fight was given a boost by the mobilizations of Native Americans and others at Standing Rock that blocked the passage of the Dakota Access Pipeline across sacred land and a river near the reservation. More people than ever are learning about the case.

When the sentence of Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López was commuted Jan. 17 it showed that it is possible to fight and win. But victory never comes easy.

The freeing of López was not a gift from Obama, it was the result of a decades-long fight that actively involved tens of thousands of people around the world and won the support of hundreds of thousands more, especially among working people on the island and in the diaspora, an important component of the U.S. working class.

The Socialist Workers Party and its candidates are joining with others to build on this victory, to demand the Donald Trump administration free Peltier and others who are in prison on frame-up charges and disproportionately long sentences because of their political beliefs. We can take the fight to free Leonard to unions, churches and other organizations under the labor banner of “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

Keep up the fight! Free Leonard Peltier now!

SWP: Oscar López victory for all workers

Continued from front page

resistance, courage and dignity in the face of 35 years of imprisonment by Washington. This victory strengthens working people in Puerto Rico, the U.S. and all those fighting against imperialist domination worldwide. We joined the celebration here in New York when we heard the news and will celebrate with tens of thousands more when you walk out the prison doors.

We hail and will join the 35 Women’s protest here in Times Square Jan. 29 and every month until you are free. We must remain vigilant!

The U.S. capitalist “justice” system acts in the interests of the propertied rulers to maintain their repressive rule and divide and weaken working people. Your victory strengthens the struggle to expose and condemn the dehumanizing conditions millions in prison face, including the torture of solitary confinement you are all too familiar with, overcrowding, restrictions on freedom of speech and voting rights, and denial of needed medical attention.

Your victory strengthens the fight to free Native American leader Leonard Peltier; former Black

Panthers Mumia Abu-Jamal in Pennsylvania, Ed Poindexter in Nebraska and Jalil Muntaqim in New York; Oregon ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond; and other political prisoners.

And it advances the fight against U.S. colonial rule of Puerto Rico at a time when the crisis of capitalism is crashing down with brutal force on the workers and farmers of the island. The U.S. rulers’ “fiscal control” board, acting to protect the profits of the bondholders, is imposing wage cuts, attacks on unions and gutting of social spending.

The Socialist Workers Party insists that workers in the U.S. can never be free as long as our Puerto Rican brothers and sisters are held in colonial bondage.

“United States imperialism, exploiting the masses within its national boundaries, at the same time and to an even greater degree, exploits the peoples of Latin and Central America, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Liberia, the Philippines,” the SWP declared at its founding convention in 1938. “These peoples are thus the potential allies of the American workers in the struggle against U.S. imperialism, and neither they nor the American workers can expect to win freedom except in joint combat against the common enemy.”

The Socialist Workers Party “stands for the immediate and unconditional independence of all the territories, colonies, and dependencies of the U.S. and for the withdrawal of all troops from them.”

But independence will never be granted, it must be taken!

As you have said, “For those of us who love justice and freedom, want a better and more just world free of colonialism and imperialism, revolutionary Cuba has been and will continue to be a beacon of hope and an example to emulate.” Under the leadership of Fidel Castro, Cuba’s workers and farmers have shown that, yes, it is possible to make and defend for over 50 years a socialist revolution under the nose of Yankee imperialism.

The Cuban people and their leadership worked continually to advance the international solidarity movement that helped win your freedom.

We will continue to tell the truth about the Cuban Revolution and the fight against Washington’s colonial domination of Puerto Rico. We are confident that here, in the belly of the imperialist monster, working people can unite to end forever the dictatorship of capital and extend the hand of solidarity to the peoples of the world.

Osborne Hart

Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York

Syrian toilers

Continued from front page

supported opponents of the regime) reflects shifts in the region as governments maneuver to defend their conflicting economic, political and military interests. Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s regime in Turkey has dropped demands that Assad step down. Moscow in turn has substantially reduced relations with Democratic Union Party (PYD), the dominant Syrian Kurdish party, and its armed Peoples Protection Units (YPG).

After the conference broke up, the two Syrian delegations — one from the regime and the other of opposition fighters — held competing press conferences.

“We don’t accept any role for Iran in the future of Syria,” said Mohammad Alloush, head of the opposition group, demanding that all Iranian-backed foreign militias leave Syria.

Assad’s envoy Bashar Ja’afari said it was “pitiful” that the opposition criticized one of the conference’s three sponsors.

It remains to be seen what course Trump’s stewardship of U.S. imperialism will take in Syria. White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Jan. 23 Trump would like to work with Moscow wherever possible, including in combating Islamic State there.

Moscow and Ankara brokered the truce following the defeat of rebels in the city of Aleppo by Iranian soldiers and allied Shiite militias along with troops loyal to Assad, backed by Russian airstrikes. The cease-fire does not include the jihadist Islamic State, nor Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly the al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front. And it does not include the Kurds.

As soon as the fighting eased there were renewed street protests against Assad’s rule. Al Jazeera broadcast video of hundreds rallying in Douma, Idlib, Daraa and elsewhere the day after the cease-fire took effect.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported Jan. 20 that hundreds of people demonstrated in suburbs east of Damascus to oppose the ongoing government siege of Wadi Barada, a valley northwest of Damascus that is the source of water for the capital. “They also called for a ceasefire in the entire Syrian territory and the release of detainees held by the regime,” the Observatory reported.

In an effort to expand their long-term presence in the Mideast, Russian officials signed an agreement with Damascus Jan. 20 to double the space for Russian warships at the Syrian port of Tartus and extend their access to an air base near Latakia.

The conquest of Aleppo put pro-government forces in control of most of Syria’s western cities and coast. But Assad lacks the ground forces to control this territory without substantial backing from Tehran and Shiite militias such as the Lebanese Hezbollah.

As a result, Iranian capital’s influence in Syria has grown. In mid-January, Iranian officials signed contracts with Damascus, gaining control over Syria’s largest phosphate mine and receiving a license to operate a mobile telecommunications network.

Working people in Syria face continuing catastrophe — with hundreds of thousands killed by the regime and its allies and Islamic State and millions driven from their homes.

Attacks on the Kurds

Both U.S. and Russian warplanes have been bombing near al-Bab, in support of a Turkish-organized offensive against Islamic State. Ankara’s central aim is to block the Syrian Kurds from taking that city and connecting territories they control on Turkey’s border.

The Kurds are the largest oppressed nationality in the world without their own homeland.

Ankara has organized a 450-person “Free Police,” including special forces, to patrol in Jarablus, conquered by Turkish-led Syrian forces in 2016, driving the Kurdish YPG from the area. A video of the cops on the internet shows recruits chanting in Arabic, “Long live Turkey, long live Erdogan.”

Ankara is currently engaged in a bloody campaign to put down opposition by the Stalinist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) inside Turkey. The Erdogan government claims the YPG in Syria is just a different name for the PKK.

At the same time, Washington has been working with forces led by the YPG to attack Islamic State’s capital in Raqqa, Syria, and with the Kurdish peshmerga in Iraq in a drive to retake Mosul from the jihadists — putting the U.S. rulers at odds with Ankara.

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